

CELEBRATING  
OVER 4 DECADES OF  
HEART & BRAIN HEALTH



THE HEART  
AND STROKE  
FOUNDATION  
SOUTH AFRICA



APPROVED AS PART OF  
THE HEART AND STROKE  
FOUNDATION EATING PLAN

Press Release

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## The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA to commemorate World Heart Day

**'Use Heart, Know Heart'** is this year's campaign message for Heart Awareness Month (HAM) and World Heart Day. It is a theme championed by the World Heart Federation (WHF) and their membership. The HSFSA is a member of the WHF. The theme for this year is underpinned by the need to encourage individuals and communities to get a deeper understanding of how to maintain good heart health. World Heart Day (WHD), celebrated annually on the 29th September, is the highlight of HAM, bringing the four week-to-week themes together in the ultimate light up of iconic buildings and sites around the world in order to put a spotlight on cardiovascular disease (CVD).

During HAM we conceptualized weekly themes highlighting key CVD risk factors. We themes encompassed Young Hearts; Mature Hearts; Hypertension and Diabetes and finally, in week 4, Cumulative Risk. In week 4 which culminates on WHD, emerging evidence on climate change, environmental pollution and so on, was considered as factors making up cumulative risk.

During HAM, the Foundation implemented many activities in community-based settings in the provinces of KZN, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, and Gauteng. Our flagship programme, the School Health Promotion Initiative (SHPI), reached young South Africans at a public-school level to make them aware of the benefits of making healthier choices for their heart health as well as overall health. Within a life course approach, detecting CVD risk in children can prevent cardiac conditions during teenage years and adulthood. Acknowledging the burden of hypertension and diabetes as key drivers of CVD, along with other CVD risk factors such as climate change, pollution and co-existing conditions, will help impart knowledge on the importance of calculating or considering ones' cumulative risk in order to take preventive action. It is also important to remember that one's genetic predisposition is also a consideration when assessing vulnerability.

In South Africa, CVD is responsible for almost one (1) in six (6) deaths, claiming more lives than that of all the various types of cancers combined. Every day, 225 South Africans die from heart disease and strokes and is the second leading cause of mortality in the country. The World Health Organisation (WHO) report (2021), states that CVDs carries the largest burden of disease, and resulted in 17.9 million deaths in 2019, which represents 32% of all global deaths. 85% of these deaths were due to heart attacks and/or strokes. It is estimated that 75% of CVD related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). SA is a middle income country by World Bank standards. CVD is one of the leading causes of death in the non-communicable disease (NCD) cluster in SA. The HSFSA stands with the NCD Alliance in the Global Week for Action on NCDs and with a call for combined efforts to help reduce the NCD burden globally and improve health equity for all.

Adopting healthy behaviours at every age and stage, even in the face of a genetic predisposition, helps lessen the risk for CVD onset and reduces morbidity and mortality. Our preventative and empowering messages through our various programs and media platforms, target South Africans on every level. As a Foundation we hope to inspire the nation to take their health into their own hands and look after their hearts through self-management.

On WHD look out for the various landmarks, nationally and globally, lighting up in red to raise awareness about CVD burden. Further to this, our teams across provinces, especially in the Western Cape, Gauteng, KZN and Eastern Cape provinces will be hosting activities on 29 September. Amongst these include Paddagat shopping centre in George, Ushaka Marine World in Durban, Cedar Square in Fourways - Gauteng and the V&A Waterfront Clock Tower in Cape Town.

Join the HSFSA to meet the SDG targets and mobilize with us for Universal Health Coverage, Access to Medicines and improvement of overall health and well-being.

For media enquiries, please contact Themba Mzondi, PR and Communications Officer on 021 422 1586 / 078 113 5216 or email [themba.mzondi@heartfoundation.co.za](mailto:themba.mzondi@heartfoundation.co.za). Media engagement will be carried out by the CEO, Health Promotion Officers and Allied Health Care staff, such as Dietitians.

### **About the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSA, established in 1980 is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.

The HSFSA aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the health care system of South Africa. Our mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.

For more information visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za). You can also find us on [www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA](https://www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA) and [www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke](https://www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke)